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# Celebrating Preservation Month in Alexandria

The National Trust held its first National Preservation Week in 1973 and expanded to a month-long celebration in May 2005. Today, Preservation Month celebrates the buildings and spaces that are significant to American history.

Historic Alexandria is excited to announce events that highlight three current historic preservation projects in our city: behind-the-scenes tours of Gadsby's Tavern, a walking tour of the Parker-Gray Historic District and a lecture on the restoration of the Murray-Dick-Fawcett House at 517 Prince St. Readers can also view an online Historic Preservation Viewer, which includes 100-year-old buildings and boundaries for both City of Alexandria and National Historic Districts at: [geo.alexandria.va.gov/Html5Viewer/Index.html?viewer=historicpreservationviewer](http://geo.alexandria.va.gov/Html5Viewer/Index.html?viewer=historicpreservationviewer).

Long before the designation of National Preservation Week, Alexandria prioritized historic preservation. The city designated its Old and Historic District in 1946, making it the third-oldest designated district in the nation, behind only Charleston and New Orleans. In 1984, it designated historically African American Uptown as the Parker-Gray Historic District.



PHOTO/OFFICE OF HISTORIC ALEXANDRIA

Homes in Alexandria's historically protected Parker-Gray Historic District.

The establishment of the Alexandria Archaeological Commission in 1975, and the Archaeological Resource Protection Code, passed in 1989, were the first of their kind nationally and reinforced historic preservation as a priority in Alexandria through the guidance of city staff. Alexandria Archaeology has received national awards for its leadership in the fields of archaeology and preservation and serves as a model for local jurisdictions across the nation.

The Bicentennial Celebration of 1976 drove historic preservation in Alexandria in the 1970s. Some of the buildings restored for the commemoration were The Lyceum, Carlyle House and the two buildings that compose Gadsby's Tavern Museum. After serving until the late nineteenth century as a tavern and hotel, these two buildings went

through a variety of commercial uses and fell into disrepair.

In 1929, American Legion Post 24 purchased the buildings, saving them from demolition. In 1972, the buildings were given to the City of Alexandria, restored and reopened for the 1976 Bicentennial celebration.

Archaeological excavation, paint analysis and research of surviving documents have provided an accurate picture of the furnishings and use of the buildings in the period 1785 to 1808. Every Saturday in May from 9:30 to 10:30 a.m., Gadsby's Tavern Museum offers a specialty tour, "Peeling Back the Layers," providing visitors the chance to go behind the scenes in spaces not normally open to the public to see how the buildings have changed over time.

Historic Alexandria is also offering a lecture on

May 9 on the first phase of the restoration of the Murray-Dick-Fawcett House with Al Cox, the former City Preservation Architect. Construction of the house began in 1772, with additions in 1784, 1797, and 1854. It is one of the oldest, least-altered wood-frame buildings in Northern Virginia.

Cox will explain some of the physical and archival research that preceded the recent restoration of the exterior building envelope, show discoveries made during this phase of construction, and discuss the next steps for documentation and interpretation. Please register in advance for the free lecture, and the free walking tour, or register for a Gadsby's Tavern Museum specialty tour at [alexandriava.gov/shop](http://alexandriava.gov/shop).

*Out of the Attic is provided by The Office of Historic Alexandria.*